No. 223

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

December 13th, 1944

DEAR MEMBER,

The News-Letter about the treatment of Germany (C.N-L. No. 220) met with a good deal of appreciation and there has been a larger demand for extra copies than for any other issue in recent months. The comments have not for the most part quarrelled with what was said, but have raised further questions or drawn attention to aspects of the subject which received too little emphasis.

One or two critics have rightly pointed out that after the general statement that it is a primary obligation of Christians to do all in their power to prevent war, the question was narrowed down to the restraint of Germany as the most immediate source of danger. By concentrating attention too exclusively on Germany we are in danger of getting the problem of prevention of war out of perspective.

For three-quarters of a century Germany has dominated the European scene. The foreign policies of other countries have been determined primarily with reference to her. A turning-point in European history will have been reached, and a fundamental change of mental habit will be required, if Germany ceases to be the focus of international relations. Yet that is what seems likely to occur. The draining away of Germany's life-blood, the utter devastation of towns and villages that must attend the resolve of the Nazi leaders to prolong resistance to the end, the destruction by the Nazis of any alternative political will on the foundation of which the life of the nation can be organized anew, and the terms which, whether we like it or not, the victorious nations are likely to impose, may prevent for generations the recovery by Germany of the position of a Great Power. We need to adjust our thinking as speedily as possible to the probable future rather than to the accustomed past.

THE TREATMENT OF GERMANY

Attention was concentrated on the problem of Germany because feeling about it is at the present moment so strong. We are in danger of being betrayed by the passions of hatred and fear into courses of action that may frustrate our primary purpose of the prevention of war. We may by an excessive pre-occupation with Germany fail to see the larger problem in its true proportions and consequently fail to grapple with it; or by our treatment of Germany we may create difficulties which make a solution of the wider question impossible.

One of our correspondents, who agrees that the primary concerns of the Christian are prevention and redemption, and that the category of punishment in relation to the German people as a whole must be

set aside, urges, very rightly, that this cannot be understood to mean that the question of *responsibility* can be ignored. "If there is even a whisper," he writes, "that *any* people can escape responsibility for the acts of its Government, the whole anchorage for an international order is in jeopardy. The very principle of ordered government and of firm agreements between peoples just dissolves, unless the doctrine of responsibility is accepted and maintained."

That is profoundly true. It is equally true—the effect of Christianity, it was said in the earlier News-Letter, is to deepen the tensions—that it was never more necessary than in the circumstances of to-day, as Dr. Karl Barth insisted in the last issue, that the Church should proclaim in unmistakable tones its own unique, distinctive message of the forgiveness of sins as man's ultimate and only hope. There is no other means of breaking the awful entail of evil, by which wrong engenders further wrong.

The balance is admirably maintained in what Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr has recently written [1]:—

"It will be natural and right to celebrate the victory which will crown the almost superhuman efforts required to achieve it. But in all this rejoicing let there also be sober thoughts about the terrifying and tragic aspects of human history which increase human potencies for both good and evil in such a way that evil is armed more formidably and requires a greater sacrifice to overcome it with each new epoch. And let there be contrite thoughts over the evil we must do in order to conquer evil. If we comprehend the present war with all its attendant achievements and sacrifices, its pains and sufferings, we can also begin to understand the relevance of the Christian faith, as the last centuries have not understood it. They believed that history was redemptive and moved to higher and higher good. Now we know that all the processes of history move toward the increase of both good and evil. In that knowledge we apprehend the broken and fragmentary character of human history on every level of its achievements and see that only God and not man can complete human history and give it meaning.

"The past centuries gave themselves to the illusion that it was easy to separate good from evil, to avow the good against the evil and to have a good conscience in espousing the virtuous cause. Now we know, as we ought always to have known, that evil taints all our good. Even the most just cause is tainted by precedent evil. Not only the predatory but the 'virtuous nations' contributed to the causes of the conflict. Even the most righteous cause is tainted with concomitant evil. It cannot be brought to a victorious conclusion without inflicting horrible suffering. And finally it is tainted with essential sin; for even the most righteous nations can not pursue their just ends without corrupting them with national and imperial pride and thoughts of aggrandizement. The whole of human history is more tragic and the mixture of good and evil is more baffling than men had supposed. If that is understood, our generation will be able to comprehend once more what the Christian faith means by the mercy of God,

[1] *Christianity and Society*, Autumn Number, 1944. Quarterly; annual subscription 4s. Agent in Great Britain: Ronald Preston, Annandale, North End Road, London, N.W. 11.

and why only the divine mercy is adequate for the infinite pathos of human existence.

"Let us at least be clear about the testimony of the *Christian Church* upon this issue. A Church which merely voices the inevitable moral arrogance of victors is the salt which has lost its savour."

THE NEW FORCES

It is a legitimate criticism of C.N-L. No. 220 that it was written too exclusively from the standpoint of the western European tradition. Any perspective of the future is bound to be distorted if the entry of Russia into world affairs and its inevitable massive influence on the future course of events are left out of account. We have hardly begun as yet to adjust our thinking to these new facts. If our ideas get set in the old moulds, there may be a rude awakening when we discover that the terms in which Russia is thinking are fundamentally different from ours.

It must be remembered also that among the western peoples themselves the war has brought about a profound disturbance of traditional ways of life. Those who have taken part in the resistance movements have been forced to live for years as outlaws in a world in which the old order had visibly broken down and continuity with the past was broken. Old prescriptions and restraints have disappeared, and new ideas are seething in the minds of those who have had to face life without any of its customary supports. What will emerge from the confusion and uncertainty no one can say.

Not only has the war brought about a far-reaching disintegration of European society, but there are positive forces actively bent on its destruction. Hitler's latest proclamation and other utterances of the Nazi leaders show that they are reconciling themselves to national defeat, but are resolved to keep alive the Nazi faith in hope of its future triumph. Nazism, which is in its essence a conscious repudiation of the whole western tradition, and of Christianity as one of the chief factors in its growth, is preparing to go underground and to continue the struggle. It has shown its power to arouse fanatical enthusiasm and to gain adherents far beyond the bounds of Germany. It may yet prove to be one of the powerful forces with which we shall have to reckon in the post-war world.

THE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSALS

It was in face of all this that we maintained (in C.N-L. No. 221) that the only sure foundation of enduring peace is in the right relation of men to their true environment of God, neighbour, nature, as these are illuminated by the historic revelation in Christ. This assertion has been misunderstood. It has been supposed that what was meant was that there must be *agreement* about these matters as the necessary condition of maintaining peace.

There was no intention of making such a claim. It is of the nature of a political society that those whose ultimate beliefs may be fundamentally different can work together for the achievement of immediate objectives. In international relations also a common creed and a common civilization have not kept Europe from being the fruitful

mother of wars; while, on the other hand, a practical working arrangement, enduring for a considerable period of time, may be reached between a Christian and a non-Christian nation.

What we had in mind in writing about the Christian universals was not professed religious beliefs, but the unalterable realities of human existence, to which, whether they are fully aware of it or not, men must conform if society is not to suffer shipwreck. The inescapable necessity is that God's laws should be obeyed, whether the obedience is conscious or unconscious. The life of an atheist may be more fully committed to the service of the God whose existence he denies than that of many a professing Christian.

What we intended to assert is this.

God is denied to-day more widely and deliberately than ever before in human history. With the rejection of God are apt to go two things necessary for the continuance of any kind of tolerable society. First, the bonds of society dissolve when men cease to acknowledge a "right" to which they owe an unconditional loyalty. Secondly, the foundation of toleration and mutual accommodation, which are essential for the working of a free political society, is undermined when men cease to be aware of their own finitude. If man is the sole arbiter of affairs, the most powerful group must seek security by forcing the same beliefs on all, and we are on the straight road to totalitarianism of either the Fascist or the Communist type.

It is vital to the growth of a true, human society that men's activities should be directed by the knowledge that they are fundamentally social beings and can find the satisfaction of their nature only in community. Only a deep understanding of this truth can deliver them from the one-sided absorption in the mastery of an external world of things, which has been their dominant interest throughout the modern period of history. It is the knowledge of what they really are that can recall them from the mad race for wealth and power, which is characteristic of society to-day, to seek fulfilment in relations of trust and loyalty with their fellow-men, in mutual responsibility and mutual service.

Though men's chief pre-occupation in recent centuries has been with the natural world of *things*, they have failed at many points—in a large part through forgetfulness of God and neighbour—to relate themselves rightly both to external nature and to that part of themselves which is deeply embedded in nature. When the laws of nature are violated or ignored human purposes must encounter frustration.

The signs are multiplying to-day that unless the eyes of men are opened afresh to the grace which appeared in Jesus Christ and they learn again from him the meaning of pity, mercy and compassion, they will go on torturing, maiming and destroying one another, and society will be rent in pieces.

These assertions, summarily stated, may seem platitudes. The truth is that the understanding of them is the hinge on which the future of humanity turns. They have an infinite significance not only in themselves, but in the fact that the whole present trend of things is in the direction of a denial of them. What we need is an overmastering conviction that recovery of faith in these simple, elementary things is the one thing that can save mankind from catastrophe.

There is no reason why Christians should continue in a state of frustration, impotence or despondency. There is no need to search anxiously for a faith that can restore health to society. The victory that overcomes the world is within our reach.

The difficulty is not in our faith, but in ourselves. The trouble is that we only half believe. The followers of other creeds have a passion and devotion that we lack. The temper of resistance movements is the dominant influence to-day. Beliefs that are largely intellectual have little force against convictions for which men are ready to stake their all.

In a recently published biography of Zhelyabov,[1] one of the leaders of the Russian revolutionary movement of the nineteenth century, we find the following statement: "When admitting a new member we never asked his views on socialism or anarchism. We asked, 'Are you ready at once to offer your life, your personal freedom and all that you have?' If he said yes, and if we believed him, we took him on." That recalls many passages in the New Testament. It would hardly occur to any one to think of it as characteristic of the Christianity of to-day.

The Christian faith in regard to the true ends of man's temporal life has to be continually renewed by the creative initiative and courage of pioneers and prophets. But in order to do its work in the world it has to find practical embodiment in the habits, practices and institutions of society. It has in the past entered into, and helped to mould, the European political tradition. It has vitalized the conceptions of responsibility, freedom and toleration which have leavened western democracies. There is in the political sphere no more important question than whether this political tradition still has sufficient vitality to make a significant contribution to the shaping of the future of mankind.

That question lies at the heart of the proposals for the prevention of war put forward by Lionel Curtis.[2] In essence the plea is that the western democracies should by a fresh creative act combine to form a State based on the rule of law, and by entrusting the functions of defence to a single common authority create a union strong enough to prevent war and thereby establish the indispensable conditions for human progress and welfare.

Similar ideas are in the air. M. Bidault, the French Foreign Minister, referred in a recent interview to the spiritual, as well as geographical, proximity of France to the Anglo-Saxon countries, and was sympathetic to some form of alliance between western European countries as part of French foreign policy. *The Times* in a leading article on November 11th, in connection with the visit of Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden to Paris, insisted on the need for an "altogether new development of relations" between the British Commonwealth of Nations and the nations of western Europe. The thesis of Mr. Walter Lippman's latest book, *U.S. War Aims*,[3] is that the Atlantic Community —of which the United States, Canada, Great Britain and France are indispensable members—is not a figment of the imagination but an

[1] *Red Prelude*, by David Footman (Cresset Press, 12s. 6d.)

[2] e.g. in his latest pamphlet, *The Way to Peace* (Oxford University Press, 1s.)

[3] Hamish Hamilton, 6s.

existing reality, and that the practical recognition of this fact is the first necessary step in building any world order.

In all these ideas there is necessarily a mixture in varying proportions of material interests and spiritual conceptions. If the drawing together is thought of primarily in terms of military alliances and trade agreements, it will always *look* as though it were directed against some other Power or combination of Powers. So long as alliances or understandings remain at this level they offer no real foundation for peace. The vital question for the future is whether the drawing together of countries which inherit a common cultural and political tradition, formed under the influence of the Christian faith, can lead to the revivification of that tradition to work as a leaven in world affairs.

About aims there is not likely to be great divergence of opinion in Anglo-Saxon countries. We all want to preserve the tradition that the State exists for man, not man for the State; that the human person has inalienable rights; that the family, the Church, and other lesser forms of association have an independent existence which must be respected by the State. But the serious question is how far these conceptions are a living and potent force in the democracies to-day; how far democracies *are* democracies in the sense in which Lionel Curtis, for example, understands the term. The beliefs in a fundamental difference between right and wrong and in the infinite duty that men owe to God and to one another, which are the foundation of his political faith, have been seriously undermined. The gravest fact in the present situation is not the rise of dictatorship and tyranny, but that the power of the political ideals of which we have spoken has been seriously weakened in the democracies themselves. The real danger lies not in the strength of evil, but in the weakness of the good.

It is for this reason that we are driven to look beyond the democracies as they are, and to take our stand on something more ultimate. Whatever the future may hold of success or failure, of new creative achievement or of relapse into a dark age, the fundamental realities of man's life remain unchanged. They belong to the unalterable nature of things. God, neighbour, nature (as God's creation and gift to be lovingly understood and humbly obeyed), the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ—these are the irremovable foundations on which we can hopefully build. Those who trust them will not find themselves betrayed or let down. Those who walk by their light need neither stumble nor fear.

We wish you all a happy Christmas.

Yours sincerely,

J. H. Oldham

P.S.—For the last two years we have had delightful temporary accommodation in the house of the headmaster of Westminster School. We are now returning to our original headquarters, and from now on all communications should be addressed to :—

20 BALCOMBE STREET, DORSET STREET, LONDON, N.W. 1.

LOVE AND LIFE

Into his last book, *Adam and Eve*,[1] John Middleton Murry has tried to put the essence of his experience of life. It is not free from defects; if he had not had on his shoulders the inexorable responsibilities of a farm he might perhaps have written a better book. It contains much that is provocative, perhaps unnecessarily provocative; much that some people will dislike intensely. But whatever its shortcomings, it is a profound and important book—a book that may cause some of those who understand it to live differently, because they have seen life with new eyes.

Berdyaev said a good many years ago with reference to Communism that it contained many important and necessary truths, but that these were all vitiated in greater or less degree by a fundamental untruth. The converse is also true; a man may be wrong about a host of matters and none the less right about the one thing, or the few things, that supremely matter. Whether Murry is right or wrong in many of his particular judgments seems to me unimportant in comparison with the central ideas which he is striving to express. Intellectual error, even in regard to matters that appear of secondary importance, if it is not recognized and corrected, may work itself out in the long run to disastrous consequences, and it is right and proper that Murry's positions should be subjected to critical examination. But to fasten on what we believe to be error before we have fully absorbed the profound and regenerating truth which the book contains is to get everything out of proportion. That is the pit into which most reviewers, so far as notices of the book have come under my eye, seem to me to have fallen.

What then is the vital core of truth that gives significance to this book?

THE HUMAN CRISIS

In the first place, Murry not only perceives, but feels in his inmost being the depths of the crisis through which mankind is passing.

Anything that deserves to be called "Christian civilization" has, in his view, finally disappeared. Its place has been taken by a soulless machine civilization. The advent of the power machine has become infinitely more significant in the lives of most men than the Christian religion. In so far as this machine civilization has a religion, that religion is Communism, which holds out to men the hope of an earthly collectivist paradise. It is a religion far less profound than Christianity, though it is not more superficial than much popular Christianity. But though it has nothing to offer to man at the deeper levels of his life, that does not mean that it may not have a long life before it.

The other religion to-day which competes, and in part blends, with Communism is nationalism. If we conceive of religion on the grand scale—the scale on which Catholicism and Protestantism once

[1] Andrew Dakers, 10s. 6d.

had meaning—these are the two religions that count to-day. And nationalism is dynamic only in so far as it runs in harness with the new industrial collectivism.

Between the industrial reality of power production and the Christian view of the significance and value of the human person the antagonism is fundamental. The mass salvation of Communism is fatal to true political society, of which, because of its depersonalizing effect, it makes men incapable. A free political society is based not only on the worth of the individual, but equally on his development into worthiness. Murry clings to the faith that power production is not *inherently* anti-personal; if it were, all would be lost. But its anti-personal tendency is much more deep-seated and much more dangerous to a free society than is commonly admitted. The survival of man as a person depends on the recovery of that faith in love, human and divine, which is the core of Christianity.

The important thing is not whether Murry is wholly right in his generalizations, but the fact that he does not, like most of us, fail to see the wood for the trees. He knows beyond a doubt where the human battle will be lost or won, and at that point he recklessly flings in all that he has.

WHOLENESS OF EXPERIENCE

A second thing that makes the book outstanding is Murry's intense concern for wholeness of experience. In no one that I know is the divorce between the intellect and the instinctive being more fully transcended. In the phrase of Keats, whom he constantly quotes, axioms are not axioms for him until they have been proved upon his pulses.

The real depth of the religious problem which we face to-day is understood, he insists, only when it is realized how profound a separation machine civilization has brought about between man's daily work and his religion. When God was present in the daily work of the common man, guiding his hands and glorified by them, worship was natural. The craftsman's work was a continuous self-surrender; it could be *lived* religion. With the coming of the machine age Christianity has ceased to be *natural*.

Personal responsibility is the indispensable presupposition of both political freedom and real religion. But to tell the ordinary man to-day that he is responsible to God for his actions is to say something which is almost meaningless. Any man who can work out his responsibility to God in action to-day must be an exceptional man. But religion is not the privilege of exceptional men. Churchmen shut their eyes to the plain fact that society is now so constituted that real responsibility in his daily doing is impossible for the common man.

The Church is without a social philosophy. It talks about welfare and morals as though they existed in complete independence of the quality of men's and women's lives. It deals in a kind of abstract hygiene whereby artificial spiritual vitamins are injected into lives that have no intrinsic vitality of their own.

The Church has lost its power over men because it has condoned and connived at the dispossession of man from his heritage, in which

he finds his fulfilment in his daily work. If his work ceases to be such as he can offer to a God who has made him in his own image and likeness, " then you may preach at him till you are red in the face, you may pump Christianity into him in the school, but you will never make him feel anything other than negative indifference or positive contempt for your Christianity. For he knows instinctively, if you do not, that the purpose of your Christianity is to sanctify a structurally anti-Christian society."

If the authority of the Church is ever to be restored, it can only come about through a regenerated Christian Church. By this Murry means something quite specific—" the forging on the anvil of the human heart by God of a new link between himself and human life." And to him " this destiny necessarily presents itself as an endeavour to realize a new integration between the intention of Jesus and the irreducible necessities of life—that is, a new and fearless effort to interpret and express the message of Jesus in the simplest fabric of human existence."

THE TRUE POLITICAL SOCIETY

The only way to reverse the disastrous trend of things is a firm resolve to build life on the foundation of relations between persons. Our task is to create a true political society. Real politics is the discovery and decision by free discussion and real experience of what is good for society as a whole. The first necessity is to create the free political society in miniature.

That can be achieved only in the true setting of human existence. The governing idea of all our efforts must be that man and his machine must be re-incorporated into the cycle of nature. By nature is meant what makes for real human happiness and the true fulfilment of man's life.

The conditions under which these lessons can best be learned afresh is in the small community living on the land. Of all industries agriculture is the one that offers the largest scope for personal responsibility. In it a man can most easily and completely find fulfilment in his work. There he can learn the meaning of responsibility for the future, in making sure that through good husbandry the land, by which society lives, is well cultivated and kept in good heart for coming generations.

Murry has, therefore, made his choice. The new order can be created only from below upwards. The nation can become a real community only in so far as it is a community of local communities, that is to say, of groups of people who can, as a matter of day-to-day experience, be aware that they really are members one of another. Before further advances can be made, there must be a proven pattern of the way in which a group of men and women can, while winning their own subsistence from the land, gradually absorb and integrate into their community members with other talents.

" Though the dream is ambitious, it is also humble. It gives ordinary men and women something to work on. It is concrete instead of abstract politics. It turns away from the illusory hope of re-estab-

lishing freedom by means of the State, to creating, at the humblest level, a form of society that, so far as itself is concerned, has grown beyond the need of the State: for it is a truly self-governing society, maintained by the continuous exercise of responsible freedom." Obviously this independence of the State can be only partial and symbolic. But a community realizing in this way its own free life stands prophetically for the true values in which alone human life can find its real fulfilment.

MAN AND WOMAN

Murry's fundamental concern is to discover how to find a radical cure for the disease of an unnatural and irreligious society. The means must somehow be found to re-unite the natural and the spiritual in a society in which the latter has become almost completely severed from men's actual life. In nothing does he reflect more truly the mind of Christ, portrayed in the Gospels, than in finding this living bond in the human family, though a good deal of what he has to say on the subject may sound strange and disturbing in some Christian ears.

The only way in which the depersonalizing influences of a machine civilization can be overcome is that the individual should experience the reality of a whole personal relationship, and this is provided in its most complete form in the relation of man and woman in marriage. A man and woman fulfilled in love find their highest good in the simple reality of each other's company. There are only two real securities—faith in a loving God and faith in a loving human being. Faith in a loving God is in these days hard to come by, and faith in human love may be the appointed way in which men and women can recover faith in God. Married life is also the greatest of schools for learning the meaning of that death of selfhood which is the gateway into true life.

It is pre-eminently in the marriage relationship, truly and deeply understood, that we may look for a rebirth of tenderness, and without such a rebirth human life must become utterly bleak. And it is only by taking all the risks of love and all the risks of living that fear can be wholly cast out. If fear is not cast out, it will petrify all the good intentions in the world.

That there can be no birth of sex-tenderness apart from Christ, and that there can be no rebirth of Christianity without a new understanding of sex is the main contention of Murry's book. He seems at times to press his case too far, and to take too little account of the many to whom sex fulfilment is denied and who are none the less in need of the experience of human love. But he is entirely right in demanding that the whole question of sex must be thought out in a fundamentally new way in the light of the specifically Christian understanding of love.

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

If some passages in the discussion of love and sex seem to take insufficient account of the truth that the spiritual not only fulfils the natural but may also be in conflict with it, the balance is redressed when the book is taken as a whole.

Without direct experience of God, Murry is convinced, there can be no religion. Unless we believe direct experience of God to be possible, we must put out of our minds all hope of a regeneration of society by religion. Nor will any theoretic view of the possibility suffice. We must ourselves have direct and incontrovertible experience of God. The essential elements in the experience of God are the experience of the compulsive power of the Good and awe before the mystery of the unknown.

These general statements receive a new profundity and intimacy of meaning in the revelation in Christ. The attitude of Jesus to life, which he invites other men to share, is that of one who knows himself to be in God's Kingdom not a servant but a son, living in a relation of loving dependence on the source of all being. Not dependence merely, but loving dependence. Man, proud man, has to become as a little child and regain the innocence of the rest of God's creatures.

" There are no rules, there can be no rules : the imitation of Jesus really means allowing God to create us day by day, by being submissive to the experience he sends. We have to become able to receive experience : we have to suffer ourselves to be turned, according to our God-given capacity, into ' experiencing natures ' ; we have to be changed into the kind of creatures upon whom God can work his will.

" There comes the moment when you know, incontrovertibly and once for all, that you are *not* the master of your fate and the captain of your soul. The immense burden of keeping your ego inviolate, your personality intact, simply drops from you ; and you cease, in the deepest sense, to be afraid. That is not to suggest that you become a hero. Some do, most do not. But the incessant and fundamental strain of maintaining your separate self *against* life does really disappear. You know that your true posture is not against the flow of life, but with it : you move with the stream. That will not make things easier for you objectively. On the contrary, the rocks, the snags, the bumps, the crashes, the downright shipwrecks will almost certainly be multiplied. For the new security is no shelter for you. How could it be ? You have been turned into an experiencing nature. Your security consists in the inward knowledge that your experiences are shaping you day by day, in strange, simple, but unpredictable ways. You are become willing clay in the fingers of God."

JESUS CHRIST

It has already been noted that no religion can satisfy Murry that does not command a total act of the whole being. He despairs of the actual Christianity of to-day because of its failure to meet that test. But he is equally convinced that those who start out with a firm decision to have nothing to do with Christianity, and who are weary of it and of most of its works, will none the less, the more completely they are willing to submit themselves to experience, be the more inevitably driven to a Christian interpretation of that experience.

" Jesus of Nazareth is the concrete image of the Good . . . The life and death of Jesus is (I believe) absolutely satisfying to contemplation ; it awakens in us that ' momentous depth of speculation ' which Keats declared to be the sign of the greatest art, and it awakens that depth of speculation in a supreme degree. For the Christian the depth of speculation into which he is plunged by his contemplation of Jesus is unique. . . .

" The collapse of a great civilization is likely to be pretty grim, on any showing ; the assertion of the religion of the individual against the false religion of nationalism, no matter how modest or unobtrusive the assertion may be, will probably be full of peril. We, therefore, really do need something to sustain us, over and above the promptings of a stout conscience. For my part, I know of no better sustenance than the contemplation of Christ, and the momentous depth of speculation it evokes. The assurance it brings to a mind and heart that have been naked to the experience is the assurance of victory in defeat. . . .

" The irrefragable witness of my own life is that I find it impossible to experience my experience without Jesus. I mean that I have found it impossible to submit to my own experience without him ; that is, without discovering that he is inscrutably and beneficently mixed up in it."

It is above all in the dying and resurrection of Christ that the living process at the heart of the world is revealed. All " positive and creative experience—the experience by which we grow, and have life more abundantly than we had it before—involves a death to the self-hood ; a dying unto life, as Keats called it."

CHRISTMAS

I lay down this book with a heightened sense of the significance of the event which we celebrate at Christmas. Murry's fearless openness to experience and insight into the state of contemporary society and the fundamental choices confronting it have helped me to see fresh meanings in the historic Christian revelation. He has enlarged my understanding of what is at stake for humanity in the incredibly daring Christian assertion that at the heart of the mystery of existence is Eternal Love.

J. H. O.

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